



December 5, 2019  
1:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Main Branch Richmond Public Library  
101 E. Franklin Street  
Richmond, Virginia  
23219

### ***Meeting Minutes***

**In Attendance:** Mr. Hassan Ahmad; Ms. Atiqua Hashem; Mr. Razi Hashmi; Ms. Hyun Lee; Mr. Eric Lin; Ms. Komal Mohindra (Secretary), Mr. Rummy Mohta; Mr. Patrick Mulloy; Ms. May Nivar (Chair); Ms. Mona Siddiqui; Mr. J.R. Smith (Treasurer); Mr. Leonard Tengco

**Not in Attendance:** Ms. Julia Chun; Mr. Bao Ly; Mr. Sunny Shah

**Governor's Office Staff:** Mr. Saman Aghaebrahim (Director of AAPI Outreach); Danielle Campbell (Special Assistant for Advisory Board Administration)

**Legal Counsel:** Mr. Justin Bell (Assistant Attorney General, Office of the Attorney General, Commonwealth of VA)

**Guests:** Mr. Brian Ball (Secretary of Commerce and Trade); Ms. Catie Finley (Assistant Secretary of Health and Human Resources); Ms. Nicole Gore (Suicide Prevention Coordinator, Virginia Department of Behavioral Health Services (DBHS)); Ms. Mijin Kim (Staff Clinician, Virginia Commonwealth University Counseling Center); Mr. Jim Newton (Administrative Director, Behavioral Health at Bon Secours Health System); Honorable Ralph Northam (Governor of Virginia); Mr. Michael Olsen (Mental Health First Aide Coordinator, DBHS); Ms. Kelly Thomasson (Secretary of the Commonwealth of VA); Ha Tran (Virginia Anti-Violence Project); Dr. Janice Underwood (Director of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Office of the Governor)

### **Welcome and Meeting Overview**

- Ms. Nivar (Chair) called the Meeting to order.
- There was a quorum of board members at the meeting.

### **December Meeting Agenda Adoption and November Meeting Minutes Approval**

- The agenda for this December meeting was adopted as presented.
- November meeting minutes were passed with amendments, as moved by Mr. Hashmi and seconded by Mr. Lin (abstention from Mr. Mohta).

### **Administration Update:**

- Ms. Campbell provided updates on plans for the VAAB website to be updated. Mr. Lin and Ms. Siddiqui offered to provide previous agendas and meeting minutes for inclusion on the website.

### **Outreach Update:**

- Mr. Aghaebrahim announced that he would be leaving his job to take a new role as legislative aide to Delegate Suhas Subramanyam.

### **Special addition to Agenda: Visit from Governor Northam**

- Governor Northam and Secretary Ball joined the meeting and the Governor thanked VAAB members for their service, with special mention of members whose terms were now ending.
- The Governor provided a short update and mentioned recent trips abroad, conversations with Virginia businesses and those seeking to do business in Virginia, and new investment figures for the Commonwealth. He also mentioned future priorities which include jobs, workforce development, minimum wage, mental health, K-12 education, community college affordability, diversity and inclusion, and health care premiums' affordability.
- The Governor also referenced an initiative to remove racially discriminatory language from Virginia's legislation (announcement to follow) and reiterated the importance of making Virginia a welcoming place for immigrants.
- The Governor thanked Mr. Aghaebrahim for his work with the Office of the Governor, and his earlier work for Mr. Northam, and expressed good wishes for Mr. Aghaebrahim's new position.
- The Governor, Secretary Ball and their supporting team only attended this portion of the meeting.

### **Administration Update (continued):**

- In response to a member question, Secretary Thomasson said they will need to take holistic considerations (akin to "puzzle pieces") into account when determining how to fill Mr. Aghaebrahim's position as positions in the Governor's office do not get posted the way other state positions do. Recommendations are welcome.
- Secretary Thomasson stated that the Governor's budget has not yet been released but the budget will determine how Dr. Underwood's office will be staffed and resourced.
- Secretary Thomasson stated that a bill will be introduced to bring congruence to the administrative functioning of the advisory boards (Council on Women, VAAB, Virginia Latino Advisory Board, and Virginia African American Advisory Board). This will align, across the boards, the number of members (21), terms (maximum of two 4-year terms) and the removal of restrictions on the number of annual meetings.
- Secretary Thomasson announced that four VAAB members (Mr. Rumi Mohta, Mr. Hassan Ahmad, Mr. J.R. Smith and Mr. Leonard Tengco) have terms that are ending and they will not be reappointed in order to give others an opportunity to serve. The VAAB members and other meeting attendees thanked the departing members for their service and they addressed the meeting participants.

### **Chair Report and Other Board Business**

- Ms. Nivar thanked VAAB members and other guests for a productive year.

### **Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), Board Operations, and Election Protocol**

- Mr. Bell made a presentation on FOIA and VAAB member obligations, and he answered questions from members. This was a “refresher” to previous presentations Mr. Bell has made to the VAAB on the topic of FOIA. Some of the key takeaways to VAAB members were to refer FOIA requests to Ms. Campbell and to understand the rules for what constitutes a “meeting”
- Mr. Bell and Ms. Campbell explained VAAB election protocols, and the requirement for in person, verbal (not secret ballot) voting.

### **Officer Elections**

- Ms. Campbell facilitated the election of VAAB officers for 2020.
- The following individuals ran unopposed and were unanimously voted in: Ms. May Nivar (Chair), Mr. Eric Lin (Vice-Chair) and Ms. Komal Mohindra (Treasurer). The position of Secretary remains unfilled and Ms. Mohindra (outgoing Secretary) will remain acting in the role of Secretary until the next VAAB meeting in February 2020.
- Ms. Campbell encouraged members to self-nominate or nominate others for the position of Secretary.
- Ms. Campbell also mentioned that seven new appointments to the VAAB will be announced shortly.

### **Panel Discussion: Mental Health, Suicide Prevention, and Adverse Childhood Trauma**

- Mr. Lin introduced the topic of the panel and the guest speakers, whose bios were shared in advance of the meeting: Ms. Kim, Mr. Newton, Ms. Tran, Mr. Olsen and Ms. Gore.
- The panelists shared information about their organizations’ services and common issues experienced by Virginians suffering from mental health challenges and childhood trauma.
- Some of the key takeaways were: there are free first-aid mental health trainings available in Virginia; hospitals and jails are “pinch points” but more, broader community-based interventions are needed including through Community Services Boards (CSB); in-language therapy and counselling services are scarce; there are shortages of applicants and professionals in this field; funding is scarce, particularly for preventative community-based care; and it is critical to collect disaggregated data to inform policy.

### **Virginia’s Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Framework Update**

- Dr. Underwood introduced herself and addressed the VAAB.
- She reiterated the historical nature of this newly created Cabinet-level position, and she stated that her key priority will be to address systemic inequities rather than individual grievances.

- A key priority is to ensure that this position gets “codified” so that it cannot be easily eliminated by future Governors.
- The Governor will announce the state budget around December 17, and that will indicate the resources available to her for her office. There are plans to hire deputies, and the hiring process will be transparent.
- Dr. Underwood expressed her passion and energy for the position and the mission, and she encouraged the VAAB to think about systemic change and disruption.

#### **Public Comment**

- No public comments were made.

#### **Adjournment**

- Prior to closing, Mr. Hashmi announced that the first VAAB public webinar would be held sometime between January and March, on the topic of the census.
- Mr. Mulloy and Mr. Lin mentioned they will share revised text for the annual report with Ms. Nivar.
- Ms. Nivar adjourned the meeting at 5:16 p.m., following a motion from Mr. Tengco, which was seconded by Mr. Ahmad.